

# Livingston County's Living Heritage

## HISTORIC PONTIAC

With Added 1986 UPDATE Data



### LIVINGSTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE Courthouse Square

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#### 1986 UPDATE: Two Courthouses

The first courthouse was erected in 1839-40 and accepted on 23 July 1842 by two County Commissioners. The second courthouse was erected in 1856, the third and last year that Judge Babcock held office. It was accepted on 6 December 1856.

### THE A. T. TALLMAN RESIDENCE 401 W. Livingston Street 1855

This Carpenter Gothic Home was built in 1854 by Charles Nettleton. Shortly after the house was built Mr. Nettleton died and his widow married J. W. Strevelle, a member of the Board of Trustees when the village of Pontiac was incorporated in 1856. *son wrote a history of Pontiac*

Mr. Strevelle later became a state senator, and it was during this time that Abraham Lincoln stayed overnight in the house after delivering a speech on "The Wheel and Axle". After a discussion of height, Mr. Strevelle measured Mr. Lincoln's height, six feet and four inches, and

cut a notch in the door casing showing it. The door casing is in the collection Lincolniana in the Strevelle Museum. Strevelle family descendants occupied the home until 1945 when the home was sold to Albert T. Tallman. The Tallman family still occupies the home.

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## PONTIAC'S OLDEST BRICK HOME 315 W. Howard Street



The oldest brick home in Pontiac was built in 1857 by Henry Jones and was constructed less than one year before the Jones House, to be seen later on the tour. This brick home now houses six apartments, but in its earlier days was a single family home and later a funeral home. The addition on the back was added later.

The home was built by one of Pontiac's earliest settlers. Henry Jones was an attorney and a judge. He built the first mill in Pontiac and platted the town of Richmond, east of Pontiac. Richmond, while once a thriving town the size of Pontiac, is now gone without a house left standing—a result of the railroad coming to Pontiac instead of Richmond.

### 1986 UPDATE: Two Men Named Henry Jones

In October of 1850, Joseph T. Jones, age 20, and Susan Popejoy, age 18, were married. In August of 1852, Henry Jones, a widower and the father of Joseph, married Elizabeth R. Popejoy, age about 44. Apparently, Elizabeth was an aunt to Susan.

Taking office on 4 September 1848, Henry Jones served as a County Commissioner. In September of 1847, Henry Jones and two other men were granted a contract to build a bridge across the Vermilion River. The bridge was washed away by high water in March of 1849.

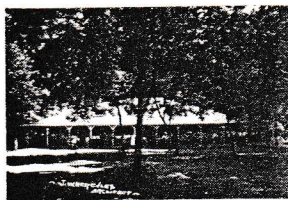
In 1851, Henry Jones and Henry Loveless laid out the town of Richmond about two miles east of Pontiac. The partners hoped that a north-south railroad would be built near their town. Several buildings may have been erected on Richmond lots and/or on adjacent land. In 1854, the railroad came through several blocks west of downtown Pontiac. Deed records and tax records indicate that no lots in the town of Richmond were sold.

Henry Jones died in September of 1854, according to the probate record. Elizabeth R. Jones, the widow, and Joseph T. Jones, the only surviving offspring listed, requested the appointment of Thomas A. Jones, a brother of the deceased, as administrator of the estate.

Henry Jones of Emmet County, Iowa, purchased lot number six in block number twenty-nine of Pontiac on the first day of October in 1855, according to deed records. This Henry Jones, a few years earlier, had left his wife, Emily (nee DeMoss), and children in this area to join the 1849 California gold rush. In returning from the gold fields, Henry stopped for a time in Iowa. On lot six, mentioned above, Henry and a partner, Edwin C. Jones, quickly built the brick structure that still stands at 315 W. Howard St. The building was probably completed early in 1856 and, apparently, it housed a retail venture of some sort. Henry bought out Edwin, his partner, in January of 1857. Eighteen year old Henry C. Jones became a clerk in his father's store.

In February of 1856, Henry Jones was elected a Trustee to serve on the first Board of Trustees for the village of Pontiac. Although not an attorney, Henry Jones was elected to the Office of County Judge in November of 1857.

In the spring of 1859, yielding to the lure of California gold, father and son headed west. Their brick structure on West Howard Street was sold at foreclosure in February of 1860. The assessed valuation of this property became very low in 1870 and 1871. Here a quote from page 242 in the 1878 History of Livingston County is appropriate: "... Judge Henry Jones erected, at Pontiac, the first brick building ever erected in the county. It is the one that has recently been remodeled, and is now occupied as a residence by Joseph P. Turner."



## CHAUTAUQUA PARK South end of Hazel Street

Chautauqua programs opened in Pontiac 80 years ago in 1898 and provided varied entertainment and education for the entire family. Season tickets for the thirteen Chautauqua days sold for \$2, and the featured speaker was Booker T. Washington.

On the right where the swimming pool is now located was the dining hall, under the management of George Hayes, where good meals were served at 25¢ or five meals for \$1.00. The auditorium was built in 1898 to seat 2000 people and was later enlarged for a capacity of 3500 to 4000. In 1900, the Chautauqua Assembly had 286 tents erected for living quarters for visitors at the park. "The Livingston" a river steamer, carried 80 passengers on excursions. The photo at left shows a meeting in progress in the early 1900's. Noted speakers and performers at the Pontiac Chautauqua were William Jennings Bryan, Governor Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin, Rev. Billy Sunday, Gypsy Smith, Samuel Gompers, Lorado Taft, and Madam Schuann-Heink.





### THE JONES HOUSE 314 E. Madison Street

The Jones House is a classic example of Gothic Revival architecture. The home, built in 1858, is the second oldest brick home in Pontiac. It is being restored by the Livingston County Historical Society with funding assistance from the state and federal government. In May of 1978 the house was officially designated an historic site and placed on the National Registry of Historic Sites.

The first owner of the home, John Dehner, was a prominent community retailer and entrepreneur. It was later owned by Henry C. Jones who was a prominent newspaper publisher in the later 1800's.

The Gothic Revival style of the home is seen in its steeply pitched gables and its arched windows. Despite its age, the brick and mortar on the exterior and the horse-hair interior walls are in excellent shape, a testimony to its unknown pre-Civil War builder. When restoration is completed, the home will have a wooden section on the east side of the back which will house a summer kitchen. Wood and shingles for the original house were locally cut from the woods where the American Legion Billet now stands.

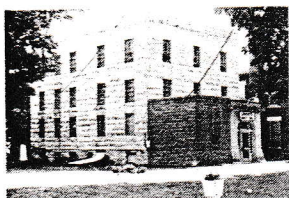
### 1986 UPDATE: John Dehner, Henry C. Jones, JONES HOUSE

Apparently, this property had been improved with a frame building of one or two rooms before its purchase by John Dehner on 23 October 1857. Soon after the purchase, Mr. Dehner had the present brick structure erected against the north or front side of the frame building. When completed, early in 1858, the kitchen remained in the frame portion and the brick portion provided living and sleeping quarters. Mr. Dehner was a successful merchant on the west side of the square for many years.

Near the end of the Civil War, Henry C. Jones left California and came back to Pontiac. Here he entered the newspaper publishing business, which he pursued until 1871. Moving to Texas, he continued in the newspaper field a few years, then moved to California and a prune farm. About 1893, he came back to Pontiac to head up an electric generating company.

Henry C. Jones purchased this brick residence in August of 1899, and it became known as the JONES HOUSE. At about the same time, Mr. Jones entered the ice business, founding the business later known as the Pontiac Ice and Fuel Co.

A fire in the JONES HOUSE, in September of 1975, severely damaged the frame portion in the rear and heavily damaged the brick portion. When demolition of the whole structure loomed, members of the Livingston County Historical Society came to its rescue. Still needed to complete the restoration is an addition on the rear to replace the original frame portion.



### LIVINGSTON COUNTY JAIL W. Water Street

The first jail was built in Pontiac in 1866 and was partially torn down and remodeled in 1906-07 at a cost of \$30,000—an additional story being added. The last hanging in the county was that of Myron Corbrige in 1922 and was held in a tented area in the rear of the jail. The prisoner had been convicted of the murder of an officer of the prison.

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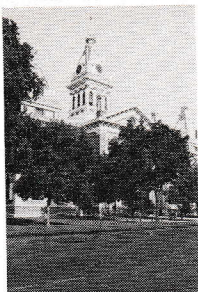
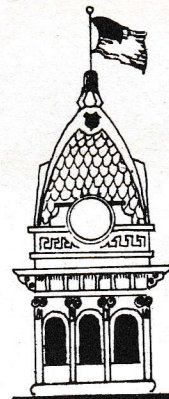
On June 23, 1871 the first three inmates were admitted to the Illinois State Reform School at Pontiac. The three boys had received sentences of three years for larceny from a judge in Peoria. In 1933 the institution became a branch of the Illinois State Penitentiary, and it is now a maximum security prison, with about 1500 inmates. Another 200 inmates are housed in medium and minimum security units outside the main wall to the south.

On July 22, 1978 the worst riot in the institution's history occurred. In this riot three guards were killed, three other guards and three inmates were injured and millions of dollars of damage was done. In the five previous riots a total of seven inmates and four guards had been killed.



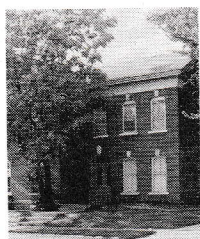
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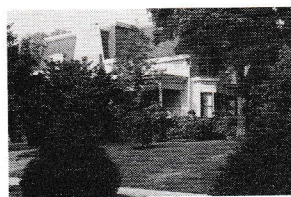


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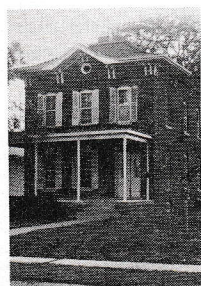
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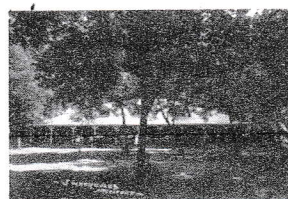


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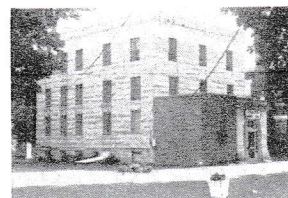


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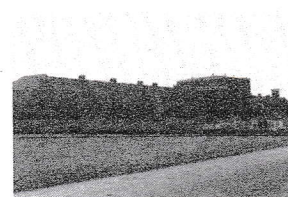
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